

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A gaming machine, comprising:
  - a cabinet;
  - at least one user-interface button;
  - 5 a value-receiving mechanism associated with said cabinet;
  - a value-dispensing mechanism associated with said cabinet;
  - a video display unit associated with said cabinet;
  - a touch-sensitive device associated with said video display unit;
  - a processor disposed in said cabinet and operatively coupled to said
  - 10 user-interface button, said value-receiving mechanism, said video display unit and said touch-sensitive device;
  - a read-only memory disposed in said cabinet;
  - basic input/output system (BIOS) software stored in said read-only memory;
  - 15 a nonvolatile memory capable of storing critical system data;
  - critical data storage software that causes critical system data to be stored in said nonvolatile memory;
  - disk memory disposed in said cabinet and operatively coupled to said processor;
  - 20 system software stored in said disk memory, said system software comprising:
    - a first software portion representing a first game that may be played by a player;
    - a second software portion representing a second game
    - 25 that may be played by a player; and
    - a third software portion that causes a first icon representing said first game and a second icon representing said second game to be generated on said video display unit, said third software portion causing one of said first and second
    - 30 games to be initiated in response to a player touching one of said first and second icons;

encoded data stored in said disk memory, said encoded data having been generated from at least one message digest that was generated based on using an encoding function with said system software;

5 secure loading software stored in memory that loads system software from said disk memory into random-access memory and verifies correctness and authenticity of said system software, said secure loading software verifying correctness and authenticity of said system software based on a comparison of data generated from said encoded data and data generated from said system software; and

10 operating system (OS) software stored in memory, said operating system software comprising an application programming interface including a first application programming interface portion that provides a software interface to said video display unit and a second application programming interface portion that provides a software interface to said touch-sensitive  
15 device,

wherein said encoded data comprises data that was generated by encrypting at least one message digest that was generated based on using a Hash function on said system software, and

20 wherein said secure loading software verifies correctness and authenticity of said system software based on a comparison of data generated by decoding said encoded data and at least one message digest generated from said system software.

2. A gaming machine as defined in claim 1 wherein said value-receiving mechanism comprises a coin-receiving slot.

25 3. A gaming machine as defined in claim 1 wherein said value-receiving mechanism comprises a paper money-receiving slot.

4. A gaming machine as defined in claim 1 wherein said value-receiving mechanism comprises a credit/debit card slot.

30 5. A gaming machine as defined in claim 1 wherein said value-dispensing mechanism comprises a coin hopper.

6. A gaming machine, comprising:  
a cabinet;  
at least one user-interface button;  
a value-receiving mechanism associated with said cabinet;  
5 a display unit associated with said cabinet;  
a processor disposed in said cabinet and operatively coupled to said  
user-interface button, said value-receiving mechanism and said display unit;  
a read-only memory disposed in said cabinet;  
basic input/output system (BIOS) software stored in said read-only  
10 memory;  
a nonvolatile memory capable of storing critical system data;  
critical data storage software that causes critical system data to be  
stored in said nonvolatile memory;  
read/write memory disposed in said cabinet and operatively coupled to  
15 said processor;  
system software stored in said read/write memory, said system  
software comprising software representing a game that may be played by a  
player;  
encoded data stored in said read/write memory, said encoded data  
20 having been generated from at least one message digest that was generated  
based on using an encoding function with said system software;  
loading software stored in memory that loads system software from  
said read/write memory into random-access memory and verifies correctness  
and authenticity of said system software, said loading software verifying  
25 correctness and authenticity of said system software based on a comparison of  
data generated from said encoded data and data generated from said system  
software; and  
operating system (OS) software stored in memory, said operating  
system software comprising an application programming interface including  
30 an application programming interface portion that provides a software  
interface to said display unit.

7. A gaming machine as defined in claim 6 wherein said encoded data was generated from at least one message digest that was generated based on using a Hash function with said system software.

8. A gaming machine as defined in claim 6 wherein said encoded data  
5 comprises data that was generated by encrypting at least one message digest that was generated based on using a Hash function on said system software.

9. A gaming machine as defined in claim 6 wherein said loading software verifies correctness and authenticity of said system software based on a comparison of data generated by decoding said encoded data and at least one message digest  
10 generated from said system software.

10. A gaming machine as defined in claim 6,  
wherein said encoded data was generated by encrypting at least one message digest that was generated from said system software, and  
wherein said loading software verifies correctness and authenticity of said  
15 system software based on a comparison of data generated by decrypting said encoded data and at least one message digest generated from said system software.

11. A gaming machine as defined in claim 6 wherein said value-receiving mechanism comprises a coin-receiving slot.

12. A gaming machine as defined in claim 6 wherein said value-receiving  
20 mechanism comprises a paper money-receiving slot.

13. A gaming machine as defined in claim 6 wherein said value-receiving mechanism comprises a credit/debit card slot.

14. A gaming machine as defined in claim 6 wherein said read/write memory comprises a disk memory.